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### **HOUSE ESTABLISHES NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR BALLAST WATER TREATMENT**

*Standards Intended to Protect the Great Lakes from Invasive Species*

Washington DC - Today, the House of Representatives passed new legislation to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species like the zebra mussel and the sea lamprey. Congressmen Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and Dave Obey (D-WI), who are strong supporters of this legislation, are calling the passage of this bill an important step towards stopping the spread of invasive species.

The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2830) sets the priorities of the agency's operations. However, the bill also includes stringent new standards and regulations designed to eliminate living organisms from the ballast water of ocean-going vessels by 2015. Beginning next year, shippers will be required to begin installing ballast water treatment systems in vessels that enter U.S. waters - all ships will be required to have the systems installed by 2014. Water quality standards for the treated ballast water will be ten times more strict than international standards that are also set to take effect in 2015.

"The problem of invasive species has been studied to death- now it's time to act," said Oberstar, the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and lead sponsor of the bill. "We've already seen infestations of the sea lamprey, the zebra mussel and the 'fish killing virus,' and we can't wait for the next infestation before we decide to take action. This legislation sets tough standards that protect the Great Lakes, and it gives the Coast Guard the authority to enforce them."

"The standards this bill sets are a vital step towards eliminating the introduction of invasive species into our waters. With these standards in place, the Great Ships Initiative can move forward with its mission of developing and testing effective technology that will meet those standards and keep invasive species out of the Great Lakes," said Obey, who, along with Oberstar, has been a leading advocate in the House of Representatives for tougher measures to protect and preserve the Great Lakes. The Great Ships Initiative is a partnership between the Great Lakes shipping industry and the federal government which has established a testing facility in Superior, Wisconsin, to develop ballast water treatment technology. As chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Obey has secured nearly \$2 million in federal funds for

the initiative.

In addition to the provisions for dealing with water ballast, the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act also:

- \* Gives the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Inspection Service the authority to require Great Lakes vessels to install equipment to kill off viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), also known as the "fish killing" virus, in their ballast water systems.

- \* Allows the Coast Guard to test a laser-based system that could replace live fire exercises on the Great Lakes. The U.S. Army has been effectively using a similar training system for several years.

- \* Authorizes continued funding for ongoing scientific research on the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute is authorized to receive \$10 million to continue operating for the next five years. The institute is a consortium of universities which includes the University of Minnesota in Duluth and the University of Wisconsin in Superior.